

KARU
Medical Associates

REC'D SEP 5 1 2003

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Responses to Questionnaire

K.P. Karunakaran

1. How important is it that your school holds down tuition increases?

Very important. If at all possible, tuition should not be increased. Every cost-cutting measure should be attempted before tuition increase is considered.

2. What do you believe is the appropriate mix of funding between state support and other sources such as tuition, endowments, fund-raising, etc.?

There should be a reasonable mix of all these elements. We know the limitations of state support in these difficult economic conditions. Renewed efforts should be made for fund-raising and endowments.

3. What role do you see the Michigan Merit Scholarship playing in increasing access to higher education?

Michigan Merit Scholarship should play a major role and is to be encouraged, subject to available state resources in these difficult economic conditions. In view of the State of Michigan's economic problems, consideration should be given for the need for economic assistance to students.

4. What is your understanding of the autonomy that the State Constitution offers Michigan's public universities?

There is a large amount of autonomy for Michigan's public universities and their Boards of Control have the responsibility of managing the affairs properly and should be free to take appropriate decisions with no fear or favor.

5. What do you see as your role as a member of the Board of Control?

As a member I undertake my role seriously. I try to learn and understand the issues in depth and derive at the right decision—with no fear or favor.

Board members have four principal responsibilities:

- 1. To hold the institution “in trust” for the citizens of Michigan. This is a fiduciary responsibility;**
- 2. To interpret public needs to the institution and to interpret the institution to the public;**
- 3. To preserve and protect the assets owned by the people of Michigan;**
- 4. To set the direction for the institution and to select its leadership.**

6. How important is the role that athletics play at your school?

Athletics play an important role at Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU).

SVSU is a NCAA Division II in competition and offers a range of sports through seventeen athletic teams (nine men’s teams and eight women’s teams). The University competes in the Great Lakes Inter-collegiate Athletic Conference against several other peer universities. This is an appropriate level of competition for a regional state university, such as SVSU.

7. What impact do you see the recent United States Supreme Court verdict on the University of Michigan’s affirmative action policies having on your schools enrollment practices?

The impact is likely to be not great.

The recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action will have no tangible impact on SVSU’s admissions policies, since the University’s policies are not race-based. I understand that race is only one of several criteria that might be viewed as adding to the diversity of a group.

8. What is your position on charter schools?

I am in favor of charter schools with appropriate oversight.

9. How much of a problem are alcohol/drugs and partying on your campus?


I am not aware of any major problem—but I am yet to research this issue in depth.

The University does not have the reputation of being a "Party School" and rigorously enforces Michigan law and its own disciplinary code and alcohol and drug use. I am told that the SVSU Board regularly monitors data on student disciplinary actions. Overall, alcohol/drug use and partying are not critical problems at SVSU, but require vigilance.

10. What is the relationship that your school maintains with its surrounding community?

The relationship that Saginaw Valley State University maintains with the surrounding community is excellent. There is a separate forum specifically assigned to promote this matter.

As a regional university, SVSU maintains a close relationship with public schools, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and other key regional organizations. There are numerous examples of ties the University has established within the region, including its placement of more than 1,400 teacher education students in area schools and its involvement in a county-wide crime prevention project.

Signed:  9-12-03
K.P. Karunakaran, M.D.

Question # 1 – How important is it that your school holds down tuition increases?

The cost of a college education is a frequent subject of conversation at the Sedrowski dinner table. My wife, Kathleen, and I have 6 children (ages 13-27). Our eldest sons, Jason and Marcus, have been through college; our daughter Alexandra is an honors college sophomore at Michigan State; youngsters Samantha, Gabrielle, & Dominic are future Saginaw Valley Cardinals. In short, our family understands the economics of higher learning.

This “understanding” transcends theory, for both Kathleen and I have first hand experience in that regard as we are proud graduates of SVSU. We both have enjoyed the “benefits” of our accomplishments and the associated “costs” have been more than reasonable.

Moreover, our family has compared cost. Our research clearly shows that SVSU’s “top-shelf” education has consistently charged the least expensive tuition among the fifteen state-supported universities. That SVSU has seen it fit and proper to provide its students a \$5.00 rebate per credit hour in these trying economic times convinces this family of eight that its commitment to excellence and affordability is genuine. We know that SVSU delivers full value - we have experienced it first hand. As a Board of Control member I am committed to holding down tuition costs. Affordability, accessibility, and value will be the bedrock of my efforts.

Question # 2 – What do you believe is the appropriate mix of funding between state support and other sources such as tuition, endowments, fund raising, etc.?

A definition of what constitutes “the appropriate” funding mix for Michigan’s universities is difficult, to say the least. I am certain that we share common ground in the belief that higher education is both a public good and a private benefit. Consequently, it follows that the state should provide a considerable portion of operating costs. As for role of gifts, endowments, and other “raised” sources in the “appropriate mix” discussion, suffice it say that these monies are restricted funds earmarked for specific scholarships or capital projects rather than “general funds.” As a result, operation costs are largely funded by some balance of state support and tuition.

In considering this definition relative to SVSU, I have found that during the past decade state support for SVSU has declined from 51% of the general fund budget to 40%, with a parallel shift of tuition and fees from 44% to 57%. (Between 3% to 5% of the general fund budget is derived from miscellaneous sources.) Subject to funding availability from the State, an increased proportional assistance mix is both warranted and justified. If a world class education is the benchmark for higher education, then the State is duty-bound to make it a reality.

Question # 3 – What role do you see the Michigan Merit Scholarship playing in increasing access to higher education?

The Michigan Merit Scholarship Award is a good thing - no doubt about it! It has certainly helped the Sedrowski family, and I am sure that it has helped many others as well around this State. As a behavioral incentive, this scholarship program has done an admirable job of rewarding those high school students who do well on the MEAP test by providing funds to help pay their college costs.

Our family has derived a substantial benefit due to our children's academic success. As a family we are grateful for the awards, yet we harbor no sense of entitlement to them. Our values are basic - - work hard, keep an open mind, extend yourself and good things will happen.

I have looked into the Merit Scholarship particulars at SVSU and found that during the past three years, 2,763 students who have received a Michigan Merit Award have enrolled at the University. This fall semester 878 enrolled students have received a Michigan Merit Scholarship. Since most federal financial aid programs are need-based, the Michigan Merit Award helps create an appropriate balance of merit-based and need-based scholarships.

Question # 4 – What is your understanding of the autonomy that the State Constitution offers Michigan's public universities?

The autonomy clause within the State Constitution allows Michigan's Universities and Board members to best serve the public interest in an atmosphere above the din of partisan politics.

This autonomy provides both authority and responsibility. Consequently, Universities and Board members exert an executive control free from political interference.

Question # 5 – What do you see as your role as a member of the Board of Control?

I believe that a SVSU Board of Control member must act as the proverbial “Good Steward.” This Stewardship has four primary concerns: First, a Board member holds the University “in trust” for the citizens of Michigan. This “trust” is of a fiduciary nature. Second, a Board member acts as a conduit, interpreting the public’s needs to the institution and relaying the institution’s needs to the public. Third, a Board member must protect & preserve the assets owned by the citizens of the State. Fourth, a board member will “chart the course” for the institution and determine its leadership.

This call to stewardship is both challenging and demanding. I pledge to the citizens of Michigan all of my strength and talent, enthusiasm and effort, mind and heart to the responsibilities before me.

Question # 6 – How important is the role that athletics plays at your school?

Over the years, our family has participated in a good number of athletic offerings on campus—both recreational and intramural. We have been very impressed by the way SVSU has built up school spirit by developing good teams in the GLIAC conference. It's not a school that wants to get into "big time" sports. It emphasizes sports as a learning experience for the young men and women who participate.

We've also seen the way SVSU builds up its intramural sports so that the non-team member can also learn from the sports experience. The school recently dedicated a "state-of-the-art" fitness facility that I think will be of great use to young and old.

We have "enjoyed" as well as "learned" from our involvement at SVSU. As far as we are concerned, SVSU has its priorities right—everything in its proper balance!

Question # 7 – What impact do you see the recent Supreme Court verdict by the University of Michigan’s affirmative action policies having on your school’s enrollment practices?

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions on University of Michigan’s affirmative action policies will have minimal impact upon SVSU’s admissions practices. The University’s admission criteria are not racially based. Accordingly, admission and access follow “whole record” guidelines.

Both the 1st Amendment and the Michigan Constitution support the fact that SVSU is an autonomous entity that should have the authority to "make academic choices with only limited judicial scrutiny." I believe it has both correctly and fairly done so in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.

Question # 8 – What is your position on charter schools?

I am convinced that with proper oversight, charter schools play a useful role in our system of public education by providing competition, increasing parental choice, encouraging innovation, and addressing the special needs of diverse student populations.

Question # 9 – How much of a problem are alcohol/drugs and partying on your campus?

I have lived and worked in the Saginaw Valley area for over twenty years. SVSU is known as a first-rate school. It has no reputation as "Party Central."

In detailed discussion with SVSU's administration, 254 "incidents" of misbehavior were cited around campus last year. Not one incident was of a "felonious" nature. Nearly all of the incidents involved "Minor-in-Possession" infractions. The University is pro-active in both addressing and preventing "alcohol/drugs and partying" on campus. As a family that is on campus frequently, we have seen the administration's involvement, concern, and effort "up close and personal." The University is doing its job well.

Question # 10 – What is the relationship that your school maintains with the surrounding community?

As a family and as a citizen, building tradesman, and union representative within the Tri-Counties region, I can proudly say that SVSU's community involvement is genuine, deeply rooted, and highly visible. Outreach and service is coordinated and widely disseminated. My family has derived academic, social, community, recreational, and athletic benefit from its many programs and initiatives.

As a regional university, SVSU maintains a close relationship with public schools, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and other key regional organizations. There are numerous examples of ties the University has established within the region, including its placement of more than 1,400 teacher education students in area schools and its involvement in a county-wide crime prevention project.

The Tri-counties and the citizens of this State are getting "true value and true grit" from SVSU. As a Board of Control member, I will advocate an even stronger and more robust relationship with the greater community.

David Gamez

Question # 1 – How important is it that your school holds down tuition increases?

SVSU, with a proud history of tuition restraint and good management of resources, is committed to providing quality education and services at an affordable cost. SVSU currently offers the least expensive tuition requirement of the fifteen State-assisted universities. In fact, SVSU's total annual tuition and required fee cost is 85% of the median for Michigan institutions and 10% below the next lowest university tuition rate. Even with the current lowest tuition rate, in the light of improved State appropriations, SVSU has provided its students a \$5.00 rebate per credit hour this semester.

In addition, SVSU's per-student expenditures are the lowest among the fifteen state universities, demonstrating a strong commitment to cost containment. However, while Boards of Control have an obligation to maintain an affordable tuition rate, the State has a corresponding obligation to provide adequate funding. Of the fifteen publicly supported state institutions in Michigan, SVSU receives among the lowest funding per student and has seen its per-student State support decline from \$4,180 to \$3,890 over the past five years.

The Board of Control must exercise its responsibility to maintain quality and to preserve and protect the taxpayer's investment in the institution by considering adjustments to the tuition and fee rate as needed; consideration of percentage increases to tuition in any given year must take into account the base tuition level upon which that increase is assessed. Again, SVSU has the lowest in the State.

Question # 2 – What do you believe is the appropriate mix of funding between state support and other sources such as tuition, endowments, fund raising, etc.?

Since higher education is a public good as well as a private benefit, the State should undertake to fund a considerable proportion of operating costs. Gift and endowment monies are usually restricted funds available for scholarships or for capital projects rather than for the general fund. This means that operating costs are largely funded by some balance of state support and tuition and fees.

Over the past decade, state support for SVSU has declined from 51% of the general fund budget to 40%, with a parallel shift of tuition and fees from 44% to 57%. (Between 3% to 5% of the general fund budget is derived from miscellaneous sources.) A more appropriate balance would be for the State to fund not less than 50% of operating costs and to undertake a more equitable system of distribution among universities to provide per student support.

Question # 3 – What role do you see the Michigan Merit Scholarship playing in increasing access to higher education?

The Michigan Merit Award gives high school students an incentive to do well on the MEAP test and provides funds to assist those students in meeting the cost of further education. During the past three years, 2,763 students who have received a Michigan Merit Award have enrolled at SVSU. This fall semester, 878 students so far have received a Michigan Merit Scholarship. Moreover, since most federal financial aid programs are need-based, the Michigan Merit Award helps create an appropriate balance of merit-based and need-based scholarships.

Question # 4 – What is your understanding of the autonomy that the State Constitution offers Michigan's public universities?

The Michigan State Constitution of 1963 defined a board of control at a public institution of higher education as "a body corporate" and stipulated that general supervision of the institution and direction of expenditures shall be determined by that board. This autonomy clause has allowed state universities in Michigan to be governed by citizens who have been set apart from the partisan political debates of the normal legislative process. This system of institutional autonomy has served the State and its universities well for over forty years. With autonomy comes the larger responsibility of serving the public interest, the students who are currently attending, and those who will attend in the future.

Question # 5 – What do you see as your role as a member of the Board of Control?

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- 1) To hold the institution "in trust" for the citizens of Michigan. This is a fiduciary responsibility;
- 2) To interpret public needs to the institution and to interpret the institution to the public;
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- 4) To set the direction for the institution and to select its leadership.

Question # 6 – How important is the role that athletics plays at your school?

SVSU is NCAA Division II in competition and offers a range of sports through seventeen athletic teams (nine men's teams, eight women's). The University competes in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference against several other peer universities. This is an appropriate level of competition for a regional state university such as SVSU.

Each year, nearly 400 undergraduate students participate in the intercollegiate athletic program, furnishing those students a wonderful learning opportunity outside their academic programs. SVSU athletics are a source of pride for alumni in the region and build support for the school.

In addition, SVSU has recently completed a new Fitness Center for the non-athlete, and over 1,000 students participated in intramural activities last year. Sports programs are in a proper perspective at this institution they are important but do not outweigh academics or other aspects of student life.

Question # 7 – What impact do you see the recent Supreme Court verdict by the University of Michigan's affirmative action policies having on your school's enrollment practices?

The recent Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action will have no tangible impact on SVSU's admissions policies, since the University's policies are not race-based. Admission to selective professional programs such as teacher education or nursing, which generally comes at the fourth semester of enrollment, is based on a broad range of individual student qualifications. These may include hardship that has been overcome or contributions a student might make to the diversity of a class. However, race is only one of several criteria that might be viewed as adding to the diversity of a group.

Question # 8 – What is your position on charter schools?

The Michigan Legislature has given universities authority to establish and oversee charter schools and this must be undertaken with seriousness and diligence. Since the Board of Control has responsibility for monitoring a school's compliance with applicable laws and regulations and for ensuring that students are well-served, the Board receives regular, detailed reports on the status of its charter schools.

The number of charter schools is set by legislation; SVSU has chartered eighteen schools, which serve some 5,700 pupils during the current (2003-2004) school year. Should the number allowable be increased, the Board might solicit proposals for new, innovative approaches to charter schools, but does not anticipate a need for this in the foreseeable future.

Question # 9 – How much of a problem are alcohol/drugs and partying on your campus?

The University does not have the reputation of being “a party school” and rigorously enforces Michigan law and its own disciplinary code on alcohol and drug use. In addition, the University provides several programs to encourage abstinence from alcohol or drugs and attempts to promote a healthy and responsible lifestyle. Nevertheless, underage drinking and irresponsible drinking do occur among students, and while much of this takes place at off-campus parties, the SVSU Board regularly monitors data on student disciplinary actions. Overall, alcohol/drug use and partying are not critical problems at SVSU, but require vigilance.

Question # 10 – What is the relationship that your school maintains with the surrounding community?

As a regional university, SVSU maintains a close relationship with public schools, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and other key regional organizations. There are numerous examples of how the University has established within the region, including its placement of more than 1,400 teacher education students in area schools and its involvement in a county-wide crime prevention project.